

HOTTA! OZAKI! KANSAI! YAMADA! CUTIE SUZUKI! KANDORI! The other YAMADA! BAT YOSHINAGA! and other stuff I saw and heard this week!

Howdy!

Welcome to DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #15!!

After endless broken promises and unforeseen delays (HEY! J-Crown is J-Crown!), I finally watched Dreamslam II (Thanks Dams! You Fuckin RULE!) It's been a wrestling intensive week here in the capitol, but I'm finally got to begin catching up on the 17(!) tapes that I haven't watched yet.

- DREAM SLAM II rules the freakin world. I don't know where to begin. I'll start with the St. Phil dream date, Yumiko Hotta. She is thrust into a whimsical match with the... adorable?...Bolshio Kid (I wanna know who hated her enough to stick her in this match), the fabulously foxy Cutie Suzuki, and the very impressive Plum Mariko against her aforementioned evil badness and the Inoue Sisters. Kyoko and Bolshoi do a lot of lighthearted comedy spots and get the crowd in that warm and loving mood. Takako is less of the "Vixen who will be very, very cross with you" at the start as she and Plum trade assorted holds. A true sense of cross-promotional mutual respect is felt as Takako and Cutie lock up, both realizing that they are the main suppliers of adolescent boys (and Dean and Scott) to their respective promotions. Then, of course, Hotta comes in and kicks the holy fuck out of everybody. Phil was telling me how brutal it was seeing her kicking a young lady dressed as a clown directly in the face, but I was more perturbed by her potatoing the hell out of Ms Suzuki. I was cringing at some of those. By the end of the assault, Cutie has a look of a lady very cheesed-off at the ultra-realistic attempt at professional wrestling by the lovely Hotta. Not that she would complain, Cutie is cute as a bug and tough as nails. Plum Mariko is very double jointed, I would suspect, considering the impossible angle at which Hotta was starting her knee-bars. GOD! Give Hotta the belt already.

The 2/3 falls final match between Dynamite Kansai and Mayumi Ozaki up against Yamada and Minami Toyota was pretty choice. The main thing I realized is that Mayumi Ozaki isn't afraid to work circles around the beloved Minami. Kansai is fabulous as always, but all three pale in comparison to Yamada. Yamada and Ozaki carry the body of the match with Kansai picking her shots to kick really hard and Toyota picking her spots to do flashy highspots. Ozaki is kind of a Michinoku Pro style wrestler- smallish, durable, and given to doing highspots at the most effective moments, as opposed to the gaudy display by her AJW counterpart. It was kind of like they had this really cool wrestling match going on, with Yamada working on Ozaki, doing toperope enziguris and such, which would build up to Kansai making a few saves and finally getting in the ring to beat the hell out of the AJWomen and then Toyota would tag in and have to change the match completely to facilitate her signature moves. It was a great match but should have been better. I blame the booking. They should have stuck Aja in there instead of Toyota and we would have had a real ass-stomper of a match on our hands.

Chigusa vs Bull Nakano was a great match and showed how much psychology a women's match can have. Of course, with these two, I would have expected no less. This was one of the

weirdest and most enthralling matches I've seen in a while. They skirted a lot of conventions, as this was a kinda "dare" match, which started out with Nakano telling Chigusa to slap her in the chest in the beginning of the fall, to the pinnacle when Chigusa dares Nakano to guillotine her and lays down and lets her at the end. In between, it was a great test of wills as each exchanges submission holds. For a match so devoid of highspots, it was great to see the feverpitch it reached. The one flaw was the goofy Nunchuks spot that Nakano did REAL late in the match and made no sense, considering what they had built up to. After the match, Chigusa gave a great speech (though I don't have a clue as to what she said) and Bull was crying and it was great. Chigusa Nagayo is the fuckin best.

I was stoked about seeing Bat Yoshinaga. She is a miniature Hotta and I was excited about finding out what she is doing now. Of course, she has since retired, which is a prerequisite to me discovering a minor promotion women's star that I like (see: Combat Toyoda).

I finally saw Harley Saito. She was very incredible. I guess she will never retire.

The Aja Kong/Akira Hokuta vs Shinobu Kandori/Eagle Sawai match was great just for the awesome hatred displayed between Akira and Kandori, but there was so much more to go along with it. Eagle was a monster which I had never pictured her as before, but she and Aja held the rest of the match together as they stalled for the s howdown between Kandori and Hokuto. Kandori wasn't as impressive as the last couple of matches I've seen her in, or maybe she didn't want to actually kill anybody, or maybe I've been watching too much Hotta, Yamada, Aja and Asuka matches. Hokuto is always awesome and this was one her best psychological tour-de-forces, playing the seething but injured matriarch, who knows she can't beat her vastly more powerful rival. Kandori is great as the smug protagonist, and Aja is great at the end as the outraged monster who is helpless to help her friend now that the damage has been done. (RASMUSSEN is about to give away an ending ((or did I just do that))so avert your eyes if you haven't seen it yet) In the final moments, when Kandori gets the armbar on Hokuto, the look of total corrupt power in the eyes of Kandori is absolutely riveting as she commands Eagle to detain Aja so she can take Hokuto out for good. The look of complete contempt for Kandori by Hokuto as they stop the match is as priceless. What a great match.

- Wrestling Power 96 was on this week and it ruled as usual. This week was Violence for the sake of Violence (I guess predicting the horrible actions at a ECW card earlier this week) and the pinnacle was the Mat Classic- Eddie Gilbert vs Cactus Jack in 91 in TWA in Philadelphia. Michael Tyler in his reveiw AND Dave, the host of Mat Classic, both commented on how "tame this is compared to today's standards." I think they both meant "great by today's standards." This was a great brawl that was infused with a high degree of actual wrestling- like a slightly better version of the truly great Sting/Cactus falls count anywhere match. I don't know how they got Eddie Gilbert yelling, "Get the fuck outta my face" to the ref past ch.38 censors but I'm glad they did. That's how I wanna remember the late great Eddie Gilbert. That and the TigerMask match he had in WWWF. They showed the HeadHunters vs Ono/Nakamaki match from IWA, with the grisly barbwire moonsault sandwich which Nakamaki enjoys partaking in a little too much. I need to go back and see the first part of the show with the ECW streetfight with Tommy

Dreamer and Brian Lee. I'll have the DVDVR supplement of matches I was gonna tell you about but still haven't seen yet.

- AWF really sucked this week. Manny Fernandez is becoming a good wrestler, though he isn't really that maniacal. On the other hand, he hit a Plancha and a toprope hurricanrana, so why nit-pick. I never want to see the Road Warriors or Tony Atlas or Nailz ever wrestle again. This week is Gentleman Chris Adams vs Fidel Sierra which could be okay or really stupid.

- Nitro sucked this week. Eddie/Konnan started well, but somehow the middle fell out and the ending was kinda goofy. Eddie best be getting the belt. Is Tony Pena really Villano IV without a mask? I was digging that match. Regal is kicking it into gear and they should bring in more pseudo international technical experts. They should definitely bring in Dos Caras to go at Regal as a clash of great technical mat styles, if they want to go that route. As for the Rey/Psicosis match- that was a highspot, not a match. I dunno.

NANIWA~

- Dean Rasmussen, CHIGUSAHEAD!